

A Sketch of the
History of Civil Service Reform
in England, India, and the
United States

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CIVIL SERVICE REFORM IN ENGLAND.

"There is one better thing than good government," says Edwin Burritt Smith, "and that is self-government."

Self-government does not of necessity imply good government. Life and property have often been more secure under a despotism than under a democracy, nevertheless, self-government with all its faults is the ideal toward which the peoples are constantly reaching.

The history of the Anglo-Saxon race is the record of a continuous struggle on the part of the people for the right of making and administering their own laws. In the early days of the monarchy the sole right of administration was vested in the king. His appointing power was absolute and unquestioned. All public offices were held subject to his will and pleasure. He could give or sell charters, grants and monopolies without fear of protest. His venal favorites presided in the courts of justice, and interpreted the law of the land in the interest of the highest bidder. The common people were in a condition little better than slavery, and too ignorant to know the cause of their own misery. These were the palmy days of the spoils system.

The first protest against the absolute appointing power of the king came from the great nobles in 1214. They forced King John to sign the Magna Charta, whose clause restricting the appointment of "justices, constables, sheriffs and bailiffs, to such as know the law of the land and mean truly to observe it," is the first civil service rule in English history.

The fourteenth century saw the birth of Wickliffe, and great ideas began to stir the heart of England. The people were learning to think, and with thinking came an insight into the cause of their grievances. They grew restive under the increasing taxation, the sale of offices, the gross injustice of the courts, the domineering insolence of the high officials. Freedom of speech did not exist for them; the right of petition was denied.

The inevitable outbreak came early in the reign of Richard II. Kings then ruled by divine right, and rebellion was not only treason to the state, but sacrilege against the Lord's Anointed; nevertheless, the royal advisers found themselves

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forced to listen to the people and pay heed to their complaints.

A parliament was called in 1377 and an examination of public accounts granted. This was the first inquiry into the abuses of administration ever undertaken in England, and the first recognition by the official class that the king's service was also in a small degree the people's service.

Armed rebellion being quelled, the fair promises of king and council were soon forgotten, but this great public upheaval did not subside without leaving behind it a remarkable statute that provided that no justice of the peace, sheriff, or other officer of the king should be appointed "for any gift or brokerage, favor or affection, but all such must be of the best and most lawful men."

This statute is the second step in the reform of the civil service, and affirms the fundamental principle that the appointing power is not a mere perquisite of the ruler to be exercised according to his own good pleasure, but a public trust, requiring that all appointments be dependent upon personal merit and a regard for the public welfare.

As might have been expected, a statute so far in advance of the age had small heed from the haughty Plantagenet kings and their subservient parliaments.

The spoils system continued only slightly curtailed and still leading to outrageous corruption and oppression.

By the middle of the fifteenth century the crushing taxation and the royal interference with elections led to another popular outbreak. An armed multitude marched up to London and demanded a change of ministry, a more careful expenditure of revenue, and the restoration of the freedom of elections.

Although under the leadership of men who were far from ideal reformers, these two great uprisings, a century apart, were the first distinct endeavors to bring about civil service reform in England. The people then for the first time made the civil administration a political issue, and demanded certain specific reforms. The second rebellion, like the first, arrested for a time the grosser abuses, but the sources and methods of the spoils system were but slightly disturbed. Public opinion, however, acquired greater power; officials were taught a wholesome lesson of caution, and the lower grades of society were raised in the same degree that feudalism and despotism lost their strength and their terrors.

It is worthy of note that these two rebellions were the only instances of the people taking up arms in their own

behalf during the whole period from the Norman Conquest to the reign of Charles I.

The cause of justice and equal rights languished under the rule of the Tudors and the Stuarts. The long practice of making merchandise of public authority had vitiated and benumbed the moral sense of the English nation. Constant wars diverted popular attention from the aggressions of the kings and their ministers, and the spoils system became the rule in church as well as state. Not only were all political offices for sale, even the royal pardon becoming a marketable commodity, but in the days of the Stuarts, bishoprics and other benefices were openly disposed of to the highest bidder. The patron of a benefice made no distinction between clergymen and laymen. The cathedrals and churches of London became the chosen scenes of riot and profanity. Bribery of the king and his favorites was the only road to political and ecclesiastical preferment.

The Stuarts acted upon the simple principle that if an office was theirs to give it must also be theirs to sell, and the man who contended otherwise was a traitor and forfeited his head.

Cromwell carried a new idea into the government. He was the first Englishman in supreme authority to hold himself responsible to the people and to govern in their name, although to him the people meant only his own adherents in church and state. He anticipated the next generation in introducing the partisan spoils system, or the subservience of the state to the party, as opposed to the despotic spoils system, or the subservience of the state to the king. He believed with the politician of to-day that "to the victor belong the spoils," and he did not scruple to use official patronage as a means of strengthening his party and perpetuating his power. The utter failure of his well-laid plans is simply another proof that official patronage never awakens gratitude nor genuine loyalty. Its recipients are well aware that their plans are due to favor; hence, their natural impulse is to follow him who has the most favors to bestow.

The mighty personality of Cromwell being removed, those anxious to retain their places hastened to proclaim their adherence to the new dispenser of patronage. The accession of Charles II ushered in a saturnalia of official corruption. The royalists, denied all recognition during Cromwell's administration, were frantic for place and power, and Charles rewarded them according to the measure of their sycophancy. He bestowed judgeships upon briefless favorites, and peer-

ages upon boon companions. Titles, places, commissions and pardons were to be bought from the great dignitaries of the realm. Charles was the first English king to meet hostile legislation with bribes. In the true spirit of the spoils system he hushed the occasional protests of Parliament with promises of profit and place, and himself openly accepted bribes from the East India Company. His brother James went a step farther by selling his influence in his own court to the king of France. Under this last Stuart the spoils system attained its rankest growth. Judges levied blackmail, and royal favorites looted the public treasury. Honors and titles, contracts and pardons, were sold at Whitehall scarcely less openly than vegetables at Covent Garden. Every possible exercise of official authority by every grade of official from the lowest to the highest was in the market as merchandise. Elections became farces. Returns were manipulated as skillfully as they now are in the most closely contested wards in New York or Philadelphia.

But the leaven of the love of good government, which has never been wholly inert in the Anglo-Saxon race, was slowly fermenting under all this corruption of placemen and sinecurists, and in 1688 a great popular revolution cast James out of England and freed the country forever of the Stuarts and their spoilsmen.

Through all these changes and revolutions the people were slowly learning the important lesson that wise administration depends as much upon methods as upon men, and remembering the price they had paid for their trust in Charles II, they imposed certain conditions upon William of Orange before calling him to the throne. By the Bill of Rights of 1688 they declared that "elections of members of Parliament ought to be free," that "no person holding office under the king shall serve as a member of the House of Commons," and somewhat later it was enacted that "judges shall hold office during good behavior." These enactments form the third series of civil service rules, and secure independence in the discharge of duty; the first two bearing only upon qualifications for appointment.

William accepted the conditions in good faith, and in the midst of the seething corruption of English politics, became himself a practical reformer. Finding no continued support for his plans and policy amid the contending factions in Parliament, he proposed as a measure of harmony that a Cabinet Council be formed from among the members in majority, under whose advice he would carry on the government. The

adoption of this measure in 1693 marks the beginning of our modern system of party government. With the Cabinet as a foothold, Parliament was not slow in seizing executive power and patronage. Corruption follows fast in the wake of patronage, and as the appointing power fell more and more into the hands of the members of Parliament, parliamentary elections became more and more mere records of barter and sale. Already in 1701, Defoe tells us, there was a regular set of stock-jobbers, who made a business of buying and selling seats in Parliament, the market price in his time being 1000 guineas.

Those aspiring to Cabinet seats were constantly creating new offices at high salaries. Every new Cabinet minister turned out all his subordinates to make room for his own supporters. Contested elections were invariably decided in favor of the party in power. Local appointments were dictated from London. The press was censored. Private letters of the party in opposition were opened in the post office. Places were bestowed on condition that a large percentage of the perquisites be paid over to some third party, a method closely allied with the vicious American system of levying party assessments upon office holders. Conditions grew steadily worse under Anne and her immediate successors, and every grade of society reflected in some degree the official demoralization.

George III pushed the spoils system to an extent only exceeded in the time of the last Stuart. Bribery was employed on a scale never known before in England. An office was actually opened in the treasury for the bribery of members of Parliament. Boroughs were publicly advertised for sale, and elections were venal beyond all example in history. Incompetent men, boys, and even idiots, were appointed to places of trust. The king himself offered bribes and shared in the official corruption. He made his infant son a bishop and endowed other fortunate babes with lucrative colonial appointments. The mutterings of the people, interpreted in Parliament by Pitt, Burke and Sheridan, and the successful revolt of the American colonies, finally forced George and his successors to yield to the demand for administrative reform. Loss of empire was a potent argument in the hands of the reformers, and from 1780 to 1853 a series of acts forbidding the sale and brokerage of offices, and prescribing heavy penalties for bribery in all its forms, was passed by reluctant Parliaments in obedience to popular behest.

The members of Parliament, however, still retained their

right of appointment. They might not barter or sell the offices under their control, but they were free to give them to their followers without reference to knowledge or fitness. They refused to consider any bill that provided for tests of character or capacity in candidates for office, and the civil service continued to be the refuge of broken down party workers and incapable members of great families.

But revolution was in the air, and the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832 was the concession of Parliament to a popular agitation that menaced the existence of the peerage and put the throne itself into danger. The great extension of suffrage, and the restriction of caste privileges secured by this bill, were followed in rapid succession by a series of reforms which revolutionized the whole system of government, and yet the public opinion that could compel such radical changes was not strong enough to get a place in public service for a young man of merit, without the endorsement of a member of Parliament or some leading official.

During the Melbourne administration, between 1834 and 1841, the higher officials joined with the people in demanding some test of efficiency in candidates for office, declaring that they could not do the public work with such an array of incapables as the partisan system supplied. The ministry yielded to the extent of requiring candidates to answer a certain number of test questions, but these "pass examinations," as they were called, while ridding the government officers of actual idiots, and the obviously incapable, were but a poor substitute for competitive examination, and resulted in but a slight improvement in the public service.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM IN INDIA.

Meanwhile the conscience of the nation had been stirred over the reports of the oppression and extortion practiced in India under the authority of the East India Company. Organized in 1600 as a company of traders, under a charter granted by Elizabeth, the East India Company had, in two hundred years, advanced to the dignity of territorial sovereigns. Their original charter was almost identical with the one granted by Charles I to the Massachusetts Bay Company, the difference in their operations being due to the difference in the countries exploited. The western traders found primeval forests, savage tribes and scattered colonists; those in the East rejoiced in rich cities to loot and in dense population to lay tribute upon. The state of perpetual warfare among the Indian princes proved the opportunity of the East India Company. Giving aid now to one side and

now to another, and taking their reward in territory, they soon became rulers over an extensive empire. Their charter was renewed from time to time by Elizabeth's successors, with more and more power to the Company, their prestige in India growing in the same proportion. The close of the eighteenth century found them performing the contradictory functions of English traders, agents of the native princes, and sovereigns over a wide-spreading territory.

As sovereigns, they maintained their own army and their own civil service. The London directors of the Company reserved the right of patronage and filled all places with their own favorites, with the natural consequence that all the familiar abuses of the spoils system prevailed in their most flagrant forms throughout the Company's dominions.

Oppression and pillage were the system of government. The civil and military employees of the Company were paid the most meagre salaries, but no objection was made should they choose to add to their incomes by extorting presents and tribute from the unfortunate natives. Young clerks went out to India on salaries of five pounds a year, and returned nabobs. The enormous fortunes thus suddenly amassed, and the recriminations among members of the service over their share of the spoils, finally attracted public attention, and led, in 1773, to a parliamentary investigation.

It is difficult to exaggerate the abuses of patronage brought to light by this investigation, and the extraordinary powers of the Company, combined with their political immorality, had, in addition, cast an appearance of bad faith over all the dealings of the English with the native princes. The utmost that could be claimed for the Company was that the corruption and extortion of their agents were, perhaps, a shade less flagrant than the people were accustomed to from their native rulers. Reform was demanded not by the people of India, long inured to oppression and pillage; nor by the Indian princes, who, overawed by the military genius and audacity of Clive and his successors, dreamed of revenge rather than of justice; but by the awakened conscience of England. Civil service reform did not, as many believe, enter England via Calcutta, but reached India from England, under the inspiration of that same sturdy middle class that would have also preserved the loyalty of the American colonies had their will been heeded by king and Parliament. The first step toward administrative reform in India was an act of Parliament curtailing the power of the East India Company, and forbidding its high officials from accepting

presents from the Indian princes, or their representatives, under penalty of forfeiting twice the amount received.

The trial of Warren Hastings, Governor-general of India for thirteen years, with the fresh recital of the corruption and political immorality among the servants of the East India Company, still further aroused public indignation and compelled the passage, in 1784, of Pitt's India Bill.

This bill provided for a Board of Control, which should exercise a supervision over all the acts of the East India Company, and provided, further, that every officer of the Indian service should, on returning to England, give a complete inventory of all his property and how acquired, as well as what property he had disposed of or transferred, and if at any time within three years this inventory could be proved false, the officer should forfeit his entire fortune.

In 1788, Lord Cornwallis, then Governor-general of India, took a long stride toward reform by abolishing the perquisites of the employees of the Company and substituting a very liberal system of salaries. The employees upon their appointment entered into a covenant with the Company whereby they agreed not to engage in any private trade nor speculation, and those signing this agreement constituted what was known as the covenanted service.

But it was speedily discovered that all these changes and stringent laws could bring about no permanent improvement so long as the London directors retained the right of patronage, and continued to send out to India their indigent friends and relatives, regardless of education or ability. Reform was needed at the fountain-head, and in 1808 the Board of Control established at Haileybury, in England, a school for the training of candidates for the Indian service. The substitution of young men specially instructed in the laws, languages, and customs of India, for the needy retainers of the directors, made a noticeable improvement in the character of the service, and many of the Haileybury men left their impress upon Indian colonial history. The directors, however, still retained the right of patronage. No one could enter the school at Haileybury without their nomination.

Another parliamentary investigation in 1853 showed that in consequence of this favoritism, the standard of the school was low and getting lower, and that the Indian service, notwithstanding its general improvement, was still marked by corruption, inefficiency, a humiliating failure to command the respect of the best people, and a still more alarming failure to control the unruly classes.

The Board of Control, therefore, in answer to the demand of public opinion, abolished all rights of patronage in the Indian service, and opened every position to free competitive examination. Every young man in England, and every native of India able to go to England for examination, was free to enter himself as a candidate for the Indian service. This sweeping reform was the forerunner of the passing of the East India Company. The great mutiny was the last chapter in the long story of its misrule, and in 1858 all its powers were transferred to the Crown.

By the law of 1853 the merit system, based upon open competitive examination, was, for the first time in history, put into actual practice on a large scale. The results were so encouraging that the English ministry, in obedience to popular demand, decided to introduce the same reform into the home government. Parliament was still the obstacle. It refused to give up its patronage or to consider any bill that favored appointment by merit. The ministry was, therefore, obliged to disregard the legislative body, and, in 1855, with the royal approval, took the bold step of appointing a civil service commission and ordering competitive examinations among all candidates for office under the civil service, with the proviso, dictated by the national reluctance to overturn long-established customs, that Parliament retain the sole right of nominating the candidates.

Popular approval of this action of the ministry was so emphatic that Parliament dared not long delay its endorsement. Moreover, the right of nomination became of little value when official recommendation no longer gave an office, but merely the chance to compete for one; and two years later its members fell into line with the majority and resolved, by a vote of nearly two to one, that they were in favor of the system of competitive examination and the abolition of all official patronage, and made known to the ministry and the people that they were ready to provide for any expense which an extension of the system might entail.

After long and thorough investigation into the working of the competitive system so far as it then existed, the ministry, on the 4th of July, 1870, through an executive order in council, abolished official patronage and favoritism, and decreed that the civil service examinations be henceforth open to all persons "of requisite age and health who may be desirous of attending the same."

That clause of the law of 1853 which required natives of India to go to England to be examined was repealed, and

boards of examination were established in various places in India, before which any native, be he Hindoo, Mohammedan or Parsee, was given the right to appear as a candidate for "any office, place or employment" in the Indian service.

In order to secure a still higher guarantee of capacity through the service, no actual appointment was to be made until after six months' trial of official work.

The change made no break in governmental routine. The holders of positions under the civil service were simply required to take the scheduled examinations; those who were successful retained their places; those who failed were gradually superseded as new candidates fulfilled their terms of probation. Absolute fairness in the examination has been maintained from the beginning, by the rule which requires that the papers of every candidate be kept filed for public inspection. A place won by merit is logically retained during good behavior, so with the exception of the heads of the great political departments, all the civil offices are held permanently. A change in the English ministry means as radical a change in policy as a change of administration in the United States, yet of all the thousands of offices connected with the civil service, never more than fifty change hands. So far from destroying party spirit, the merit system seems rather to have intensified it, since it has given the officeholder a freedom of opinion and action he never before possessed.

The chief argument of the privileged classes against the merit system, was that it was a measure in the interests of the lower orders of society, whose hands would soon grasp all appointments. In the United States, on the contrary, its opponents affect to think it undemocratic and tending to produce an aristocracy of office-holders. In both countries the system has proved itself democratic in the best sense of the word. The common schools have supplied 90 per cent. of the successful candidates, and the universities but 10 per cent. In England, moreover, the adoption of the merit system marks a wonderful advance in popular education, for with the privilege of aspiring to a place in the public service has come the necessity of fitting one's self for that privilege. Public intelligence has risen to meet the demands of an intelligent system. Thirty years' experience has only strengthened its hold upon popular favor, and there is probably no public man in England who would advocate a return to the days of official patronage.

With a few variations in administration adapted to the

diverse local conditions of a wide-spreading empire, the competitive system has assured the loyalty of the colonies and has made the English civil service respected throughout the world. The English people themselves have made it so essentially a feature of their government that a reported violation of its rules nearly caused the downfall of the most popular prime minister of the nineteenth century. Lord Beaconsfield, at the height of his power, was once accused of appointing one of his adherents to a minor clerkship without requiring him to submit to competitive examination. Such a popular storm was raised by this reported violation of justice and equal rights, that Lord Beaconsfield was forced to make a categorical denial of the charge from his place in the House of Lords.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM IN THE UNITED STATES.

"No nation," according to Lecky, "ever started on its career with a larger proportion of strong character, or a higher sense of moral conviction, than the English colonies in America. They almost entirely escaped the corruption that so deeply tainted the government at home."

Their experience with the corrupt and incapable civil agents sent out from England led our early statesmen to insist strongly upon character and efficiency as the sole requisites for office holding. Washington, Jefferson, and Adams have left on record strong expressions of their abhorrence of that political system which degrades the public service into a mere reward for partisan activity. They held that public office is a solemn trust. For thirty-nine years the government was administered on these high principles. In all that time there were but seventy-three removals from office. Public employees were encouraged to work with an eye single to the good of the service by the full assurance that their terms of office depended solely upon their own honesty and efficiency.

In 1820 an act of Congress limiting to four years the terms of office of collectors of customs, navy agents, army paymasters, and similar responsible offices, became the opportunity of the spoilsmen. It was engineered through Congress by an adroit politician with the ostensible purpose of providing for a periodical examination into the accounts of these officers, and the popular understanding was that all who stood the test were to be immediately reappointed. Monroe and John Quincy Adams, by their unpartisan interpretation of the act, frustrated the spoilsmen for nine years, but with

the inauguration of General Jackson in 1829 began the prostitution of the public service to intrigue and partisanship. He began what he was pleased to call "his task of reform," by making more removals in one month than six presidents had made in thirty-nine years, and his first year in office marked the dismissal of two thousand meritorious public servants, whose only offense lay in their political opinions. He filled their places with his own partisans, paying small heed either to their integrity or ability. Consternation reigned throughout the country. The surviving statesmen of the Revolutionary period denounced in unmistakable terms this subversion of the principles of good government.

Jackson's apologists have since claimed that it was really Martin Van Buren, Jackson's Secretary of State, who thus handed over the government as a prey to the spoilsmen. Van Buren had been a disciple of Aaron Burr when that astute politician laid the foundation of party patronage in New York, and devised a regular political machine, which later developed into Tammany Hall. But whether upon Van Buren or Jackson must rest the ignominy of having introduced the spoils system into national politics, no one can explain away Jackson's responsibility during his own administration, and he and Van Buren are the only presidents in our history who failed to express their detestation of a system which reduces the public service to spoils of war.

By 1835 the demoralization of the service had become such a scandal that a committee was appointed by the Senate to enquire into the extent of executive patronage and the practicability of its reduction. Their report showed an enormous increase in the expenses of government under the new system, and the committee held that the inevitable tendency of patronage was "to convert the entire body of office-holders into corrupt and supple instruments of power, and to raise up a host of greedy subservient partisans ready for any services, however base."

Successive committees appointed by successive congresses reported in practically the same terms, and every president after Van Buren urged a return to the methods of Washington and Adams, but the spoilsmen, in and out of Congress, succeeded in defeating every measure looking toward reform. In 1853 Congress met the growing complaints against the incompetency of government employees by passing an act requiring pass examinations in certain departments, but although these so-called examinations may have had some effect in excluding the most ignorant and illiterate of the

candidates, they proved, on the whole, quite as ineffectual as they had done in England as a means of raising the general standard.

The Civil War, with its inevitable corruption and jobbery, increased immeasurably the demoralization of the public service. Lincoln complained that the desire for place and the pressure of the party leaders for patronage, bore more heavily upon him than all the burdens of the war. The place hunters that thronged Washington during the reconstruction period, and the ceaseless demands they made upon the executive, led President Grant to appeal to Congress for relief. He asked for reform in the manner of making appointments, claiming that the spoils system did not "secure the best men, and often not even fit men, for the public service." Mr. Jenckes, a member of the House from Rhode Island, had, in 1866, striven unsuccessfully to obtain a hearing for a civil service reform bill, but now, upon the urgent appeal from the executive, Congress passed, on March 3, 1871, an act empowering the President "to prescribe such rules and regulations for the admission of persons into the civil service of the United States as will best promote the efficiency thereof."

Under this act, President Grant appointed a commission that formulated a complete system of competitive examinations. The President in transmitting their report to Congress, promised himself to observe all the rules, but called attention to the fact that without further legislation they would not be binding upon his successors. So far from responding to the President's advice, the House, in 1874, voted to repeal the civil service law, and although the Senate showed itself more friendly, the whole subject was dropped, leaving the law upon the statute book with no appropriation for carrying it out.

The Republican platform for 1876 declared strongly for reform in the civil service, and President Hayes in his inaugural address spoke of the paramount necessity of the reform and urged a return to the principles and practices of the founders of the government. In his successive messages to Congress he pointed out the failure of pass examinations to exclude favoritism and partisan influence, and showed that the abuses of the civil service grew with the growth of the population, and were becoming too serious to be tolerated. In deed as well as in word, Mr. Hayes showed himself a supporter of wiser administrative methods, and during his term of office radical reforms were made in the Post Office, the Department of the Interior, and the New York Custom

House. Mr. Garfield urged the abandonment of the system to which he, a little later, himself fell a victim, and his successor, Mr. Arthur, in his first message to Congress, asked that appointments be based upon ascertained fitness, and that the tenure of office be stable.

A Congressional committee, appointed in 1882 to investigate into the state of the civil service, reported that it was "inefficient, extravagant and, in many instances, corrupt, and that a change was imperatively demanded." In accordance with this recommendation, Congress passed a bill which received the President's approval and became a law January 16, 1883. This bill is based upon the preceding one of 1871, and embodies also the chief features of the English civil service system. It authorizes the President to appoint a commission who shall devise suitable rules and regulations for securing open competitive examinations; emphasizes the necessity of a term of probation for successful candidates; forbids party assessments of office-holders, and expressly stipulates that no recommendation from a Senator or member of the House shall be received or considered by any board of examiners. All offices are to be classified according to the amount of salary attached before being placed under the competitive rules. Those carrying medium salaries were classified first and the President was given authority to extend the classification as occasion should serve. Mr. Arthur gave the law his earnest support and extended the number of classified places. Mr. Harrison declared the system "incomparably better and fairer than that of appointment by favor," and added still further to the classified service. Mr. Cleveland believed that the abandonment of the merit system would mean the loss of "the surest guarantee of the safety and success of American institutions," and gave it support, though handicapped by an overwhelming pressure for place. Mr. McKinley, who had been known in Congress as a supporter of the civil service bill, said, upon assuming the office of President:

"The system has the approval of the people, and it will be my endeavor to uphold and extend it." His executive order of July, 1897, forbade removals from any office in the classified service "except for just cause and for reasons given in writing."

The exigencies of the war with Spain provided opportunity for a renewed attack upon the merit system. When the Urgency-Deficiency Bill of 1898 was passed by Congress, the enemies of the reform succeeded in inserting a clause per-

mitting the employment of certain clerks in the war and treasury departments without examination, on the ground that the Civil Service Commission could not provide as many as were immediately required. The commission showed that it had 6000 certified persons ready for service, but the bill passed notwithstanding, and received the President's signature. On May 29, 1899, Mr. McKinley issued an executive order which had the effect of removing, directly and indirectly, over 10,000 places from the classified service. It was doubtless owing to this order and the backward tendency it represented, that all mention of civil service reform was omitted in 1900 from the platforms of the two great political parties, for the first time in twenty-five years.

• Mr. Roosevelt's accession to the Presidency put new energy into the cause of civil service reform. In his first message to Congress he said:

"The merit system of making appointments is in its essence as democratic and American as the common school system itself. It simply means * * * that when the duties are entirely non-political all applicants should have a fair field and no favor, each standing on his own merit as he is able to show them by practical test. Written competitive examinations offer the only available means in many cases for applying this system. * * * Wherever the conditions have permitted the application of the merit system in its fullest and widest sense, the gain to the government has been immense. * * * The merit system is simply one method of securing honest and efficient administration of the government, and, in the long run, the sole justification of any type of government lies in its proving itself both honest and efficient."

One of Mr. Roosevelt's first steps was to appoint a strong civil service commission, through whose efforts, reinforced by his own authority, the civil service rules have been revised and extended. Persistent endeavors have been made to break up the practice of transferring favored individuals from the unclassified to the classified service without competitive examination. An order has been issued providing for boards of labor employment in cities where laborers may be registered for positions in the unclassified service. Congress has been reminded that the best interests of our foreign trade demand that the consular service be included under the civil service rules. The merit system has been established in every department of the civil service of the Philippines. Mr. Roosevelt has been especially emphatic in

his refusal to allow labor unions to interfere with the decisions of the civil service commissioners, and he has lent his personal influence and authority to the investigation of the Post Office scandals.

He has also, it must be admitted, stained this brilliant record by yielding to political pressure in several conspicuous instances, notably in the boss-ridden states of Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Some method, whether act of Congress or constitutional amendment, should be devised whereby all political patronage could be taken from the senators and representatives and the President freed from the intolerable pressure of the party leaders. But as Parliament was for years the great obstacle to the reform of the civil service in England, so Congress, greedy of power and patronage, blocks the path of good government in the United States. Nothing but an educated public opinion will compel Congress, as it did Parliament, to consent to purer and better methods of administration.

If civil service reform has not, as yet, in this country the popular approval it commands in England, it is owing to a systematic evasion of its rules by some high officials, and a half-hearted support by others.

Our presidents, since the passage of the law of 1883, have all been supporters of the merit system, and each one has extended the classified service. They all erred, however, in failing to observe the wholesome English precedent of "no removals" before placing a department under civil service rules, and this error in judgment, or, more accurately, this submission to party dictatorship, has caused a certain misapprehension as to the purposes and advantages of the merit system. Moreover, the persistent evasion of its responsibilities by Congress and its cowardly committal of the burden of reform to the shoulders of the executive, gives the opportunity for one President, under great political pressure, to undo much that has been accomplished by his predecessors.

But in the face of all these drawbacks, there exists ample evidence of the economy and efficiency of the merit system wherever it has been honestly applied. The national civil service is on a higher plane than at any time since Jackson's administration. Out of 271,188 Federal offices, 134,548 are subject to competitive examination, and the list is constantly growing. The increasing popularity of the merit system compelled all parties in their platforms of 1904 to endorse the reform of the civil service and demand an extension of its

rules. The power of graft in the various state legislatures has made the progress of the reform slow in state affairs. New York and Massachusetts stand alone in having effective civil service rules based upon the national law.

The new charters demanded from time to time by our growing cities reflect in their provisions for appointment to office the increasing desire for a government based upon sound business principles, rather than upon a system of pulls, deals and political favoritism.

Boston, New York, Baltimore, San Francisco and Chicago have incorporated the competitive system into their local government. But however skillfully these charters be drawn, there always seems to be some way in which the civil service rules can be evaded or ignored under party pressure. The various departments of the city government continue to be used as rewards for party service, and offices are multiplied to provide for needy party workers.

Under Jackson's administration, the employees of the New York Custom House once refused to testify against a defaulting collector, on the ground that they were in his service and not in the service of the United States. In like manner our police have been taught to regard themselves in the service of the local boss, rather than in the service of the city. The result is everywhere the same—vice is encouraged, and crime protected. In every great city the Department of Public Safety has become a department of public danger. The only remedy is the absolute divorce of the civil service from political influence, whether by the tried system of competitive examination, or by some other more radical method yet to be devised.

The reform of the civil service has become the great moral question of the day, and as such commends itself to the women of the country. If our women's clubs stand for anything, they stand for moral progress and civic righteousness. In what better cause can we all unite than that of honest, unpartisan government?

The spoils system is second only to slavery in its baneful effects upon the national character. As slavery degraded the master as well as the slave, so the spoils system saps the morals of both rulers and ruled.

The re-establishment of our civil service upon the plane designed for it by the makers of the Constitution has become the imperative duty of the hour. It is the great moral question which asks the united attention of the 250,000 members of the women's clubs of America.

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